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ABSTRACT

Improving human relations through better interpersonal communications is the focus of this training module. It guides trainers through the activities and lessons necessary to teach the skills which lead to effective interpersonal communication. Eight activities are described and materials, including 14 transparency masters and 7 handouts, are contained within the module. Goals for the participants are the following: (1) to become familiar with basic information on interpersonal communications; (2) to analyze and discuss the effects of verbal and non-verbal communication on interpersonal interaction; and (3) to become familiar with strategies to enhance interpersonal communication and interaction. The suggested time for completion of the module is 3 hours. Eight more training modules and three technical assistance modules related to desegregation and equity are available. (VM)

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TRAINING MODULE VIII

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Interpersonal Communications: A Human Relations Practicum

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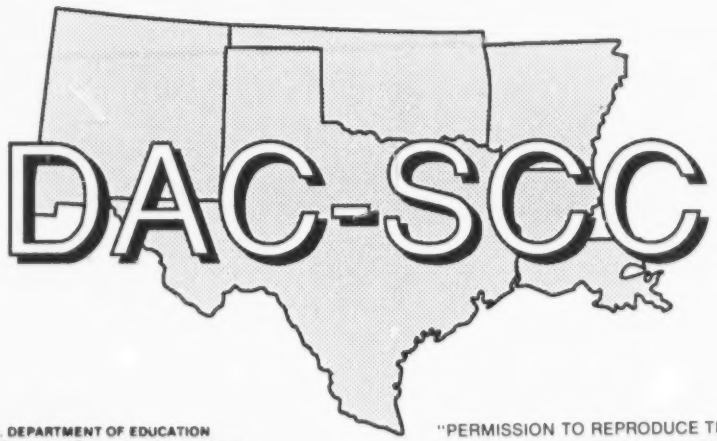

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Training Module VIII: Race Desegregation

Interpersonal Communications: A Human Relations Practicum

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F O R E W O R D

The Desegregation Assistance Center - South Central Collaborative of Region VI, located in San Antonio, Texas, serves the educational equity needs of school personnel, parents and students in a five-state area: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas.

The technical assistance and training that our center provides focuses on the issues and problems related to race desegregation, gender equity and national origin desegregation. This task is great, the needs are diverse, and the geographic area is extensive. Thus, we are pleased to have developed twelve technical assistance and training modules (four in each equity area) that are intended to build the capacity of school personnel to address their own needs.

We wish to acknowledge the excellent collaboration and contributions of our satellite center at the University of New Mexico-Albuquerque, in the development of these modules.

Each module is complete with objectives, pre/post-tests, activities to help participants meet each objective, readings, handouts, and transparency masters. The modules have undergone a rigorous review process by experts in each state in our service area. Their comments and contributions have been carefully incorporated into the final modules. The modules are:

<u>Technical Assistance Modules</u>

Federal Statutes and Directives Regarding National Origin Students

Federal Statutes and Directives Regarding Title IX Compliance

Civil Rights Compliance: An Update

<u>Training Modules</u>

I First and Second Language Acquisition Processes

II Integrating the ESL Student into the Content Area Classroom

III Recognizing Cultural Differences in the Classroom

IV Sex Stereotyping and Bias: Their Origin and Effects

V Modeling Equitable Behavior in the Classroom

VI Avoiding Sex Bias in Counseling

VII Equity in Counseling and Advising Students: Keeping Options Open

VIII Interpersonal Communications: A Human Relations Practicum

IX It's a Matter of Race: Race Relations in the Desegregated Setting

We have attempted to bring you the most up-to-date information in these modules. They are available individually ($7.50 each) or as an entire series ($75.00). A "Trainer of Trainers" session can also be arranged to enhance the capacity of your own personnel to use these modules effectively.

Breaking down the barriers to equal educational opportunity is a critical step towards educational excellence, equity and empowerment for all students. We hope these modules will expedite that effort.

Gloria Zamora, Pn.D.
Director, DAC-SCC

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Interpersonal Communications: A Human Relations Practicum

Summary: This module will provide participants with information on the skills which establish foundations for effective interpersonal communication.

Length of session: 3 hours

Objectives:

1. Participants will become familiar with basic information on interpersonal communications.
2. Participants will analyze and discuss the effects of verbal and non-verbal communication on interpersonal interaction.
3. Participants will become familiar with strategies to enhance interpersonal communication and interaction.

Overview of Session:

Time	Objective	Activity	Materials
25 minutes		Warm-up	Handout 1
5 minutes		Pre-test (optional)	Pre-test
40 minutes	Objective 1	Lecturette	Transparencies (1-13) Handout 2
15 minutes		Break	
70 minutes	Objective 2	Small Group Interaction Problem-Solving	Handouts 3-6
20 minutes	Objective 3	Lecturette	Transparency 14 Handout 7
5 minutes		Closure	
5 minutes		Post-test (optional)	Post-test
5 minutes		Evaluation	

Warm-up:

Time: 25 minutes

Materials:

Handout 1. Warm-up Activity Sheet

Process:

Focus the participants' attention by telling them that our ability to communicate effectively with others is a product of who we are based upon our past experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs. Also let them know that the ease with which we interact with one another is affected by the setting where the interaction takes place, as well as the trust we have in the person to whom we are talking.

(Distribute Handout 1)

Ask the participants to take a few moments individually to think about and complete the three statements on the Warm-Up Activity Sheet. Once they have completed the statements (give them about four minutes), ask them to pair up with someone.

Explain to them that this is a communication workshop and that it will not work unless people have an opportunity to communicate. Tell them that they will have four minutes in all, during which time each of the partners will have two minutes to tell the other partner how they completed each statement.

In the process of explaining how they completed statement number one they should tell their partner why they feel that they are the positive things that they say they are. For statement number two, they should explain why the experience had a positive impact on them. For statement number three, they should explain why they believe whatever they believe.

Be sure to limit each speaker to two minutes. When both partners are finished, debrief the activity by leading a brief discussion. Ask the participants:

1. How did you feel about talking to someone about yourself?

2. Would it have been easier to talk to someone else about personal shortcomings?

3. What did you think about as you talked to your partner? Did you wonder what your partner would think of you? Did you wonder if your partner believed what you were saying?

Make the following points after the short discussion is ended:

1. When we communicate we do so with a certain perception of ourselves, as well as of the person with whom we are communicating.

2. If our self-concept is negative, our perception of the other person(s) also will be affected negatively.

3. Our self-concept is a product of our past experiences and the effect they have had upon us. These experiences affect our attitudes and perceptions about the world around us and those whom we encounter. If our experiences have been generally negative, we tend to see the world and people as negative, suspect, and not to be trusted. The reverse also tends to be true.

4. Our belief systems and the opinions we form are also a product of these past experiences, as well as our values, our sense of right or wrong, and our sense of good or bad.

5. Each time we enter into interpersonal communication, these experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions are brought to bear upon the communication. They are a part of us, and we are a part of them.

6. We make subconscious decisions about what is and is not important, what is right or wrong, and what is good or bad, and then we communicate accordingly.

7. We constantly must check out what we are perceiving through our senses (sight, taste, touch, smell, and/or hearing) to ensure that we are perceiving in approximately the same way as the other person, if real understanding is to take place.

8. When our perceptions of an incident, event, or thing is different from those of the person with whom we are communicating, a breakdown in communication occurs that leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

   Explain to the participants that during this training session they will learn why this breakdown occurs.

Pre-test (Optional)

Time: 5 minutes

Materials:
Pre-test

Administer the pre-test to the participants. Provide the correct responses from the answer key below.

Answer Key:

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. d
5. b

Pre/Post-test

Name:_____ Date:_____

Determine the correct response and circle the correct letter.

1. Communication exists on more than one level. These three levels are:

   a. intuitive, formal, and informal.

   b. symbolic, formal, and nonverbal.

   c. verbal, nonverbal, and symbolic.

   d. verbal, nonverbal, and informal.

2. The principle of disconfirming responses:

   a. causes a person to try to break through negative communications barriers.

   b. causes a person to manifest behaviors that can be suppressed under other circumstances.

   c. causes a person to value himself or herself as a person first, and then as a communicator.

   d. causes the receiver of the response to question his or her self-worth and to feel less involved with the other person.

3. The interactionist's model views language:

   a. in a social context which requires analyzing the language and speech fields.

   b. in a social context which requires examining the language community and the speech community.

   c. in a linguistic context, and therefore discredits the importance of the social context of language for operational purposes.

   d. in a linguistic context, and therefore requires only a minimal adherence to social contextual interaction.

4. The five components contributing to effective interpersonal communications are:

   a. acceptance of feeling, listening, truth, self-disclosure, and feedback.

   b. direct acknowledgement, general response, expressiveness, agreement on content, and supportiveness.

   c. the irreversibility of communication, the inevitability of communication, authenticity, and congruence on all levels.

   d. self-concept, listening, clarity of expression, coping with angry feelings, and self-disclosure.

5. The five confirmation responses are:

   a. tangential, interrupting, impersonal, incoherent, and incongruous.

   b. direct acknowledgement, agreement about content, supportive response, clarifying responses, and expression of feeling.

   c. self-concept, listening, clarity of expression, expression of angry feelings, and agreement about acknowledgement.

   d. Science, listening, use of the sixth sense, "the third ear," and dialogue as more confirming than monologue.

Objective 1: Participants will become familiar with basic information on interpersonal communications.

Time: 40 minutes

Materials:

Transparencies:

1. The Eight Principles of Communication
2. Interpersonal Communication Values
3. Principles of Confirmation
4. Disconfirming Responses
5. Confirming Responses
6. Principles of Language Behavior and Effective Interpersonal Communication
7. Wordy Phrases
8. Parallel Lines
9. The Two Ladies
10. The Old Lady
11. The Young Lady
12. The Hidden Man I
13. The Hidden Man II

Handout:

2. Principles of Language Behavior and Effective Interpersonal Communication

Lecture:

Let's consider some of the factors of interpersonal communication which affect its quality. Before we do, let's look closer at some critical principles of interpersonal communication.

Source:

A Brief Overview of Communication. Urbava, Il: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, n.d.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

(Display Transparency 1)

A number of generalizations can be made about the communication process. In some cases these generalizations can be supported by research findings. In most instances they reflect a position or a theoretical point of view that seems to be helpful in understanding communication events.

1. **Communication is a process**. The belief that communication should be viewed as a dynamic process rather than as something static has been expressed quite effectively by David K. Berlo, a communication theorist. He rejects the possibility that nature consists of events or ingredients that are separable from all other events. He argues that you cannot talk about the beginning or the end of communication or say that a particular idea came from one specific source, that communication occurs in only one way, and so on.

2. **Communication is inevitable**. One cannot <u>not</u> communicate. The failure to say something in response to a message communicates a great deal. When two or more people are together, they are constantly communicating with one another, even during periods of silence. This principle clearly implies that communication involves a great deal more than the encoding and decoding of overt verbal messages. Communication can be viewed as the generation of meanings and all of us generate meanings in ourselves and in others all the time.

3. **Communication is continuous**. If we view communication as the generation of meanings, then we would have to agree that internal communication processes -- that is, intrapersonal communication processes -- never stop. Even during sleep, intrapersonal communication continues to operate. As the previous principle indicates, not only does intrapersonal communication never stop, but interpersonal communication is continuous as well.

4. **Communication is irreversible**. Once something is communicated in an interpersonal situation it cannot be erased or "taken back." A commitment we cannot live up to, a slur that we "didn't mean," even a hostile glance that we immediately regret -- all become part of the record. It is possible, of course, to deny that we meant what we said or to insist that our facial expressions or remarks were misinterpreted, but such defenses or denials can only provide new information for others to consider, not change the past.

5. **A major purpose of communication is more communication**. We often say things to one another in order to sustain the communication relationship. In such instances, the content of our messages is less important than the fact that we are maintaining the communication channels that we have established. We sometimes refer to such communication about

nonconsequential matters as "small talk." Malinowski called it "phatic communion." Small talk or phatic communication is a substitute for silence, and since it keeps the channels "open," it tends to make it easier for us to communicate about more serious topics when matters of substance need to be discussed.

6. **Interpersonal communication occurs on more than one level.** When most people observe or talk about the communication of two or more individuals, they generally focus on the content of the messages they hear; that is, they respond to the specific ideas that are being discussed or the attitudes and opinions that are being expressed. However, every communication situation includes messages of a different nature, as well. These are messages about the content messages. Such messages are referred to as metacommunication, because they consist of communication about communication. Metacommunication includes facial expressions, vocal inflections, intensity, and other nonverbal events that tell us how to interpret the words we hear. Messages on a metacommunicative level also tell us something about the relationships that exist among the communicators. They may tell us, for example, about the relative status of the communicators, whether some individuals are being controlled by others, how the communicators view one another, how they view themselves, and the like.

7. **Our self-concept is affected by and affects our interpersonal communication.** The way we see ourselves is to a large extent a function of the way others respond to us. And we become aware of the responses of others through our interpersonal communication. If people seek us out, if they tell us that they like us, if they respond to our remarks in an enthusiastic way, we are likely to perceive ourselves in a more positive way than we would if others avoided us, told us that they did not like us, and responded to us in a negative and hostile manner. We are not trying to suggest that others are always accurate in their perceptions of us, or that we ought to see ourselves the way others see us. The responses that others have to us might tell us a great deal about them and practically nothing about ourselves. This would be especially true if we were the victims of stereotyping and prejudice. Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid being influenced by the people with whom we interact.

We have pointed out that our self-concept is affected by the way others communicate with us. In addition, if our self-concept is positive, we are more likely to express ourselves in a confident and aggressive way than if our self-concept is not positive. The way we see ourselves often influences what we say and how we say it. It also has an effect on the way in which we respond to the remarks of others. Some of us might be much more willing to criticize someone who has a positive self-concept than someone with a negative self-concept who might not be able to "take it."

8. **Physical setting can have an important influence on interpersonal communication.** In recent years, communication specialists have become increasingly aware of the effects that architecture, the arrangement of chairs, the shape of a table, and many other physical factors can have on communication. A study by Mele Koneya demonstrated that students who are placed near the center of a classroom are more likely to participate in a teacher-led discussion than students who are placed near the sides of the room. Kenneth Nations discovered that who communicates with whom in a government organization is related to the location of offices and the shape of the corridors that lead to the various offices. Physical factors may not always be important determinants of the interpersonal communication that takes place between two or more people, but they should not be ignored.

The principles of language, perception, and communication that have been presented in this section provide an overview of the interpersonal communication process. They also give a systematic way of understanding and explaining some of the things that happen when individuals engage in interpersonal communication.

(Display Transparency 2)

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION VALUES

Openness. Openness is a value that many teachers associate with good interpersonal communication because they are convinced that under most circumstances in which we wish to establish a wholesome interpersonal relationship, open communication is better than a situation in which we try to hide our true thoughts and feelings. There are times, of course, when, in order to be discreet or to avoid hurting another person, we refrain from saying anything or we "lie a little." But the fact that there are times when it is important and necessary to be diplomatic do not in any way alter the fact that, in the long run and under most circumstances, openness will result in a healthier relationship than polite diplomacy.

Spontaneity. There is no effective way to respond to the command to "be spontaneous." No matter how creatively we react, the fact that our behavior is a response to someone's request suggests that we are not being completely spontaneous. Nevertheless, spontaneous interaction, that is, interaction that accurately reflects the immediate and genuine reactions of the participants to one another, will result in better interpersonal relationships than interaction that is cautious, inhibited, and preplanned. There are many communication situations, of course, that require careful preparation. Some formal public speaking tasks, for example, demand careful preparation and well-rehearsed expression. However, most interpersonal communication situations call for freedom and spontaneity. Anyone who has ever tried to interact freely with a salesperson who responded with "canned speeches" knows how painful non-spontaneity can be.

Here and now. Much of our conversation deals with the past and with the future. It is often rewarding to share past experiences or to talk about situations that we are anticipating. However, there are times when we look "backward" or "forward" in order to avoid having to deal with the reactions that we are having to the immediate interpersonal situation. "Flight" prevents us from taking full advantage of the present and interferes with our ability to develop a better understanding of one another. When we focus on the here and now and share our reactions to the present, there is a greater likelihood that we will develop a stronger and better interpersonal relationship.

Authenticity. Authenticity in interpersonal communication involves a willingness to acknowledge our own ideas, thoughts, and feelings and to communicate them, when appropriate, frankly and without distortion. It is not easy to be authentic or honest with ourselves and with others, and there are occasions when discretion is required. Nevertheless, authentic communication should be encouraged in most situations.

Self-Disclosure. Closely associated with the values of honesty and leveling is self-disclosure. It can result in disagreement and conflict, but the conflict can have some worthwhile outcomes. By acknowledging our differences we are in a position to resolve them, and the process of resolution can improve our interpersonal relationships.

Empathy. Empathy refers to our ability to understand another individual accurately. It is the skill of putting ourselves in the "other person's shoes" and accurately identifying his or her feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and the like. Empathy is not easy to achieve. Often, what we believe is empathy turns out to be little more than the projection of our own thoughts and feelings onto the other person. But difficulty in achieving empathy does not make it any less important a value. There are probably few experiences more profound than being understood.

Acceptance. Being understood can be an extremely worthwhile experience. On the other hand, understanding coupled with rejection could be very painful. In addition to being understood, most of us want o feel accepted. The ability to communicate our genuine acceptance of another person is a valuable skill.

Warmth. Closely associated with acceptance is the ability to communicate a positive regard and a feeling of warmth for another person. The awareness that we are regarded warmly by another person permits most of us to communicate in a more genuine and relaxed manner with that person.

Trust. Trust is an essential ingredient in an interpersonal relationship, and Morton Deutsch suggests that trust is most likely to develop among individuals who are genuinely concerned about each other's welfare. In his analysis of the literature on trust, Kim Giffin isolated the following five factors that seem to influence a listener's trust of a speaker:

1. A speaker's **expertness**, as shown by his or her perceived intelligence and/or authoritativeness.

2. A speaker's **character**, as shown by the congruence of his or her perceived value systems with those of the listener.

3. A speaker's **good will**, as shown by the listener's perception of his or her intent to communicate propositions and information that the speaker considers most valid and reliable.

4. A speaker's **dynamism** or **activity**, as shown by the listener's perception of such things as aggressiveness, strength, interest in the listener, forcefulness, and swiftness.

5. A speaker's **personal attraction**, as shown by the listener's perception of his or her likability, sociability, cheerfulness, kindliness, and friendliness.

Acceptance of Feelings. There is a general tendency in our culture to deny or minimize the importance of feelings and to stress logic and ideas. Ideas and the ability to deal with them in a systematic way are extremely important in interpersonal communication. However, problems often occur in an interpersonal situation because of a refusal to acknowledge and deal adequately with the feelings of the participants. Therefore, teachers of interpersonal communication place great value on the open expression of feelings and on the ability to deal with the feelings of others, once they are expressed.

Listening. In the past, speech communication teachers placed so much stress on speaking skills that they tended at times to ignore the importance of good listening. Today, however, the importance of listening is widely recognized by instructors of traditional speech communication subjects and by teachers of interpersonal communication as well.

In a public speaking situation, it may be worthwhile to listen critically, analytically, perhaps even defensively. But in an interpersonal setting where there is an emphasis on openness and the communication of feelings, the listener has an obligation to do more than merely defend him/herself against poor logic or inaccurate statements. Instead, listening involves the understanding of the attitudes, feelings, and point of view of the speaker, and the reflection of that understanding so that the speaker knows that he or she has been understood. It is not necessary to agree with someone whom one understands, but it is important in an interpersonal relationship that is worth sustaining that we listen for understanding, and not for purposes of rejection or combat.

A number of values associated with good interpersonal communication have been discussed. It has been pointed out that teachers of interpersonal communication stress the importance of such standards as openness, honesty, leveling, self-disclosure, warmth, empathy, acknowledgement of feelings, and effective listening. By combining these values with the insights into the

interpersonal communication process that are provided by the various communication modules and systematic approaches represented earlier, as well as with the findings of communication research scholars, it is possible to formulate principles of good, or effective, interpersonal communication. A number of these principles of good communication are presented in the following section.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Speech communication scholars traditionally have been concerned with prescription. By prescription, we mean a body of advice or suggestions designed to help others improve their communication behavior. In a sense, then, the principles that are presented in this section represent prescriptions for achieving better interpersonal communication. We begin by examining some of the conclusions reached by Evelyn Sieburg, who has conducted an elaborate and profound inquiry into the subject of confirmation.

(Display Transparency 3)

Principles of Confirmation

When we interact with a person some of our communication behaviors serve to confirm that person, and some of our behaviors tend to disconfirm that person. Confirming behaviors are those that cause the other person to value himself or herself as an individual, and disconfirming behaviors cause the other person to question his or her self-worth. Generally a healthy or positive interpersonal situation is one in which the participants' experience is a confirming one. Evelyn Sieburg's research has generated a great deal of insight into confirming and disconfirming communication. Here are some of the conclusions that can be drawn from Sieburg's investigation.

1. **It is more confirming to be recognized as existing than to be treated as non-existing.** Did you ever get the feeling in a social situation that you really weren't there? Unfortunately, most of us at one time or another interact with other people whose responses to us suggest almost a total lack of understanding or awareness of the things that we are saying. In such situations we feel disconfirmed, but not because others disagree with us. The disconfirmation occurs because the remarks of others reflect so little understanding of our own remarks that the interaction that results is no confirmation of our existence.

2. **Dialogue is more confirming than monologue.** When two individuals take turns saying things in each other's presence without actually responding in an honest and spontaneous way to each other's ideas and feelings, their interaction might be described as a series of monologues rather than as a dialogue. Dialogue requires a genuine involvement with the other person. To engage in dialogue we must be willing to compare the ideas, opinions, beliefs, feelings, and attitudes of

others with our own, and to work at the resolving of the differences that we encounter.

3. **Acceptance is more confirming than interpretation.** A third principle of confirmation developed by Sieburg is related to the difference between showing somebody acceptance and interpreting that person's remarks. When we respond to the statements of another person by genuinely trying to understand the thoughts and feelings he or she has expressed and by reflecting that understanding in our responses, we are showing acceptance. Interpretation consists of drawing inferences and reaching conclusions about the other person's remarks that go far beyond anything that person thought that he or she had expressed said.

4. **It is more confirming to be treated personally than impersonally.** A personal response to the remarks of others involves a concern for the feelings expressed and not just for the content of the remarks. It also involves a reaction to the particular needs and interests of the other person. The differences between personal and impersonal responses can often be seen in the language that is used. Impersonal responses are much more formal, contain fewer personal pronouns, and are more indirect than personal responses.

(Display Transparency 4)

Disconfirming Responses

Here are some of the ways that two individuals may disconfirm each other in their interactions:

1. **Impervious response.** An impervious response to something we have just said is one that fails to recognize the remarks we just made.

2. **Interrupting response.** When the other person begins to talk before we have finished what we are saying, the response is an interrupting one.

3. **Irrelevant response.** An irrelevant response to something we have said is one that seems to have nothing to do with the ideas or feelings we just expressed.

4. **Tangential response.** When someone responds to our remarks by acknowledging what we just said and then quickly shifting to a new and quite different topic, the response is tangential. In a sense, a tangential response is a more polite way of "pulling the rug out from under us." It also tends to be less disconfirming because it involves a recognition of our communication.

5. **Impersonal response.** An impersonal response is one that makes us feel as if we are a part of a large audience. Although the setting is an

interpersonal one, the individual we are talking with responds to us with a speech that seems designed not for us, but for anyone who will listen. An impersonal response is similar to an abstract monologue, and tends to give us the impression that the person we are interacting with has very little genuine involvement with us.

6. **Incoherent response**. A response that contains appropriate inflections and that appears on the surface to be a reasonable reaction to something we said, but that doesn't make much sense at all on the content level, is an incoherent response. An incoherent response has form but very little substance. It is also likely to contain such cliches as "you know," "like," and so on.

7. **Incongruous response**. Occasionally, the way someone responds to our remarks speaks louder than what the person's words actually say to us. "I had a good time at your party" spoken without conviction, or "Who's hostile? I'm not hostile!" shouted in anger, are examples of incongruous responses. When there is little goodness or fit between what an individual says and the person whom he or she says it, the response is incongruous.

There are also ways in which we confirm one another in our interpersonal interaction.

(Display Transparency 5)

Confirming Responses

1. **Direct acknowledgement**. When we recognize the other person's remarks and react directly to them by saying something that represents a direct response to those remarks, we confirm that person through direct acknowledgement.

2. **Agreement about content**. When we agree with the ideas, attitudes, opinions, or beliefs expressed by another person, our response is a confirming one. However, our response would not be a disconfirming one if we disagreed with the other person. Disagreement may not be confirming, but since it clearly acknowledges the other person's communication, it is not disconfirming either.

3. **Supportive response**. When we support another person by responding to his or her statements with understanding and reassurance, our responses are confirming.

4. **Clarifying response**. A clarifying response can focus either on the content of the other person's remarks or on the feelings that are being expressed. We clarify by elaborating on what the other person has said, by asking for more information, and by saying something that enables the other person to expand on his or her remarks.

5. **Expression of positive feeling.** Positive expressions of feeling in response to the statements of others are confirming. "I like your ideas" or "I'm excited about your plans" are examples of positive feeling responses.

In order to improve the effectiveness of verbal interactions, communications should take several important steps.

(Display Transparency 6)

Principles of Language Behavior And
Effective Interpersonal Communication

1. **Communicators should recognize that there will always be more to say.** The nature of language and of reality is such that we can always say more about anything. No topic is ever exhausted, and this is especially true in an interpersonal situation where we are likely to discuss a variety of matters in a relatively spontaneous and unsystematic manner. Hence, it is important during interpersonal communication to maintain an awareness of our inability to base any conclusions we reach on a thorough consideration of all of the facts. Such an awareness should enable us to avoid becoming too rigid or dogmatic or closed-minded in our positions and attitudes. Every conclusion we reach should be viewed as tentative and subject to revision. Our interpersonal communication is likely to be enhanced whenever we can keep it open and flexible.

2. **Communicators should clarify their meanings.** It is common in an interpersonal situation to assume that others are using words the way we generally use them, but this may not always be true. "I parked my car far away" might mean half a block to one person and half a mile to another. "Sally had three drinks at the party" might suggest to some that Sally drinks too much and to others that she does not overindulge. It is perfectly acceptable to ask someone what he or she means by something or to elaborate on our own remarks when others appear to be misinterpreting us. Problems are most likely to arise when we naively assume that there is no need for clarification or elaboration because everyone understands the words that are being used. One reason why our interpersonal communication is redundant -- why we repeat our feelings and ideas -- is that we tend to recognize the fact that further clarification is necessary if we are to avoid being misunderstood.

3. **Communicators should attempt to date and index their references.** In November 1972 Richard M. Nixon, after winning the presidency by more than sixty percent of the vote, was not the same person that he was in May 1973, when he appeared on television to explain his role and position with regard to the Watergate scandal. Yet our language allows us to talk about Nixon without any reference to time

or situation. Clearly, "Nixon 1972" is not the same as "Nixon 1952" or "Nixon 1973." People and events change and to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity in our interpersonal relationships, it is wise to qualify our references by dating and indexing them. Dating might consist simply of letting people know the periods to which we are referring by stating the date or time. Indexing refers to any acknowledgment of the fact that we are using a term in a particular way. For example, the word silence could refer to the quiet that exists in an interpersonal situation when the participants are calm, relaxed, and satisfied. It also could refer to a state of frustration in which no one knows what to say, a state of fear in which the participants are afraid to say anything, a state of awe in which the participants are at a loss for words, and so on. By indexing the word, that is, by clarifying our particular use of the word silence, we can reduce ambiguity and communicate more effectively.

4. **Communicators should differentiate between statements of fact and value judgments.** Many of our assertions refer to facts that can be observed by others and that are capable of verification. "The price in the supermarket of meat has gone up" or "The population of River City has increased over the past ten years" are examples of factual statements. But such statements as "The steak is too well done" or "River City is overpopulated" are value judgments that tell us as much about the person making the statement as they do about the events being judged. Difficulties can arise when we treat judgments as if they were facts and fail to recognize that they represent a point of view. Some of these difficulties can be avoided by using the phrase "to me" whenever we make a value judgment. This phrase clearly establishes the fact that the speaker is revealing something about himself or herself and is presenting a point of view.

Source:

A Brief Overview of Communication. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. n.d.

It's amazing how we assume that something is the way it is without question. In truth, our perceptions of reality are a matter of what we perceive reality to be. That is the reason why we must agree upon what the content of a message is before we can say that effective communication is taking place. You now are going to look at some optical illusions. Remember that these are illusions; that is, what appears to be there may or may not be.

(Display Transparency 7)

Ask three different people to read one of the phrases on the transparency. If they do not get the phrases right, ask three more. Tell the group that the reader should have read:

Once in a a lifetime
Paris in the the spring
Bird in the the hand

Our perception very often will cause us to take what appears to be familiar and act as though it is absolute. We never question whether there might be something changed or different about what appears to be familiar.

Additionally, we tend to block out that which is differently or changed in something that is familiar to us. We simply assume that the familiar is unchanged, or we ignore the differences. It's as if our minds are saying, "you don't need that information, ignore it."

(Display Transparency 8)

Equally important about our perceptions is that we very often will distort reality based upon whatever our point of focus is.

With the parallel lines on top, we become so focused on the point where the lines intersect that our minds "force" us to push the parallel lines out of the picture. To most people the lines appear to be curving outward.

At the bottom of the image, the lines may appear to be curving inward, even though they are parallel. In this instance, our minds are trying to focus in one place, but the information, the images, do not allow that to happen. In our minds we compensate for this by trying to include everything, even the unimportant. The more you are able to imagine a straight line at the points where the lines meet between the parallel lines, the more you will be able to see the lines as parallel, rather than curving. In other words, focusing on the right information keeps everything else in perspective.

Another thing that may happen with our perceptions is that we may look at something completely differently from someone else, even though the information is exactly the same. We may perceive one thing while the other person perceives something else entirely different. To make matters worse, they may not be able to see our point of view, or we theirs.

(Display Transparency 9)

In this transparency there is an old lady and a young lady. How many in this group can see the old lady? How many see the young lady? How many see both?

Some people absolutely will not be able to see one or the other figure. They have become so focused on what they do see that they won't allow themselves to consider anything else.

(Display Transparencies 10 and 11 to show the participants the old and young lady images are in the combined drawing.)

Remember that communication can be very difficult when we are talking about different things, even though the same information is being considered.

When we communicate, we are likely to experience more success, more effectiveness when we agree upon the content.

(Display Transparency 12)

For example, this man is what we want to see in the next illusion.

(Display Transparency 13)

Can you all see him?

Our task was easier because we knew and agreed upon what we were looking for. The same holds true for our communication on an interpersonal level. When we agree upon the content, or the goal, or the central point, we are more likely to be successful.

Break: 15 minutes

Objective 2: Participants will analyze and discuss the effects of verbal and non-verbal communication on interpersonal interaction.

Time: 70 minutes

Materials:

Handouts:

3. Cross Cultural Communications
4. Activity Sheet: Attitudes Communicated Nonverbally
5. Case Studies
6. Case Studies Response Sheets

Introduction

Verbal communication, that which we hear and speak, is the principal form of communication. The reading activity in which we are about to become engaged will help us to understand that it is not just what we say that is important, but the context in which we say things, and how we say what we say.

Activity 1: Cross-Cultural Communication - 20 minutes

1. Distribute copies of the article "Cross-Cultural Communications" to each participant.

2. Create small groups, with four to five people in each group.

3. Tell the work groups that their task for the next 20 minutes is to:

   a. Read the article;
   b. Select and record 5 points from the article which they feel are the key points to remember;
   c. Allow each group's spokesperson to present the group's information.

4. During the large group discussion, be sure that the following points are presented, either by one of the groups or by you:

   a. We must want effective communication to take place in order for it to happen.

   b. Sociolinguistics is the study of language structure in its social context.

   c. Two critical factors in cross cultural communication are the language field and speech field.

   d. The language field consists of those languages, in standard or non-standard forms, within a language which can be used for verbal expression.

e. The speech field is that area involving the rules of speaking which associate particular message forms with particular settings and activities.

f. Classroom teachers needs to put forth the effort to understand the precise message form of their students in order to avoid misunderstanding.

g. A speech network is the merging of one's language and speech fields with someone else's through shared varieties and speaking rules across communities.

h. A speech community is a group of people who share rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech.

i. A speech situation is an instance within the speech community which is marked with or absent of speech.

j. A speech event is a particular incident within a speech situation which is governed by rules.

Activity 2: Nonverbal Communication - 20 minutes

As we have just seen, the words we use in our communications are important. Equally important are the other forms of nonverbal communication which we use, and from which we derive meaning. This nonverbal communication takes the form of facial expressions, body language and gestures, body posture, hand movements, and so on. Very often, we may say one thing verbally while our nonverbal communication says something else. This next activity will help you to focus on how meaning is communicated through body language and gestures.

(Distribute Handout 4)

Have each small group brainstorm a list of body language, facial expressions, and other gestures which fit each of the terms given. If you feel that time will not allow each group to complete a list for each attitude, you may give each group only one or two words. Have members of each group report their information. You also may allow individual participants to add other nonverbal behaviors.

Activity 3: Case Studies - 30 minutes

Materials:

Handouts:

5. Case Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5
6. Response Sheet

1. Divide the participants into five groups.

2. Distribute one case study and several response sheets to each of the small groups.

3. Once members of each group have read their case study, let them analyze the situation, using the response sheets. Each individual should complete the response sheet before the group begins to make group decisions as a whole.

4. Allow the spokesperson for each group, to read that group's study aloud and present their analysis.

Objective 3: Participants will become familiar with strategies to enhance interpersonal communication and interaction.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

Transparency:

14. Five Components Contributing to Effective Interpersonal Communications

Handout:

7. Hints for Increasing Listening Skills

Lecturette:

We all can be better communicators if that is our goal. It does take work, but it is worth it. There are some very important components of communication which create a clear distinction between good and poor communication. These are:

(Display Transparency 14)

1. **SELF-CONCEPT**

The most important single factor affecting people's communication with others is their self-concept -- how they see themselves and their situations. While situations may change from moment to moment or place to place, people's beliefs about themselves are always determining factors in their communicative behavior. The self is the star in every act of communication.

We all have literally thousands of concepts about ourselves: who we are, what we stand for, where we live, what we do and do not do, what we value, what we believe. These self-perceptions vary in clarity, precision, and importance from person to person.

Importance of Self-Concept

Our self-concept is who we are. It is the center of our universe, our frame of reference, our personal reality, our special vantage point. It is a screen through which we see, hear, evaluate, and understand everything else. It is our own filter on the world around us.

Our self-concept affects our way of communicating with others. A strong self-concept is necessary for healthy and satisfying interaction. A weak self-concept, on the other hand, distorts our perception of how others see us, and may generate feelings of insecurity in relating to other people.

People with poor views of themselves may have difficulty in conversing with others, admitting that they are wrong, expressing their feelings, accepting constructive criticism from others, or voicing ideas different from those of other people. In their insecurity, they are afraid that others may not like them if they disagree with these people.

Because they feel unworthy, inadequate, and inferior, they lack confidence and think that their ideas are uninteresting to others and not worth communicating. They may become seclusive and guarded in their communication, negating their own ideas.

Forming the Self-Concept

Even as self-concept affects our ability to communicate, so our communication with others shapes our self-concept. As human beings are primarily social animals, we derive our most crucial concepts of self from our experiences with other humans.

Individuals learn who they are from the ways in which they are treated by the important people in their lives -- sometimes called "significant others." From verbal and nonverbal communication with these significant others, we learn whether we are liked or not liked, acceptable or unacceptable, worthy of respect or disdain, a success or a failure. If we are to have strong self-concepts, we need love, respect, and acceptance from significant others our lives.

Self-concept, then, is a critical factor in a person's ability to be an effective communicator with others. In essence, an individual's self-concept is shaped by those who have -- or have not loved him or her.

2. LISTENING

Most communication education has focused on skills of self-expression and persuasion; until quite recently, little attention has been paid to listening. This overemphasis on the skills of expression has led most people to underemphasize the importance of listening in their daily communication activities. However, each person needs information that can be acquired only through the process of listening.

Listening, of course, is much more intricate and complicated than the physical process of hearing. Hearing is done with the ears, while listening is an intellectual and emotional process that integrates physical, emotional, and intellectual inputs in a search for meaning and understanding. Effective listening occurs when the listener discerns and understands the sender's meaning. Then the goal of communication is achieved.

The "Third Ear"

Reik (1972) refers to the process of effective listening as "listening with the third ear." An effective listener listens not only to words, but to the meaning behind the words. A listener's third ear, Reik says, hears what is said between sentences and without words, what is expressed soundlessly, what the speaker feels and thinks.

Clearly, effective listening is not a passive process. It plays an active role in communication. The effective listener interacts with the speaker in developing meaning and reaching understanding.

(Distribute Handout 7)

Several principles can aid in increasing essential listening skills.

1. The listener should have a reason or purpose for listening.
2. It is important for the listener to suspend judgment initially.
3. The listener should resist distractions -- noises, views, people -- and focus on the speaker.
4. The listener should wait before responding to the speaker. Too prompt a response reduces listening effectiveness.
5. The listener should repeat verbatim what the speaker says.
6. The listener should rephrase in his or own words the content and feeling of what the speaker says to the speaker's satisfaction.
7. The listener should seek the important themes of what the speaker says by listening through the words for the real meaning.
8. The listener should use the time differential between the rate of speech (100-150 words per minute) and the rate of thought (400-500 words per minute) to reflect upon content and to search for meaning.

3. CLARITY OF EXPRESSION

Effective listening is a necessary and neglected skill in communication, but many people find it equally difficult to say what they mean or to express what they feel. They often simply assume that the other person understands what they mean, even if they are careless or unclear in their speech. They seem to think that people should be able to read each other's minds: "If it is clear to me, it must be clear to you, also." This assumption is one of the most difficult barriers to successful human communications.

A "Longer" Board

Satir (1972) tells of a family ruckus that occurred when the father sent his son to the lumber yard for a "longer" board. The child thought he knew what his father wanted and dutifully went to the lumber yard, but the "longer" board he brought back was still three feet too short. His father became angry and accused the boy of being stupid and not listening. The father had simply assumed that since he knew what he meant by "longer" his son also would

know. He had not bothered to make himself clear or to check his meaning with his son.

Poor communicators leave the listener to guess what they mean, while they operate on the assumption they are, in fact, communicating. The listener, in turn, proceeds on the basis of guessing. Mutual misunderstanding is an obvious result.

To arrive at planned goals or outcomes -- from accomplishing the mundane work of everyday life to enjoying the deepest communion with another person -- people need to have a means for completing their communication satisfactorily.

Effective Communicators

People who can communicate their meaning effectively to others have a clear picture in their mind of what they are trying to express. At the same time, they can clarify and elaborate what they say. They are receptive to the feedback that they get and use it to guide their efforts at further communication.

4. COPING WITH ANGRY FEELINGS

A person's inability to deal with anger frequently results in communication breakdowns.

Suppression

Some people handle their anger by suppressing it, fearing that the other person would respond in kind. Such people tend to think that communicating an unfavorable emotional reaction will be divisive. They may become upset even when others merely disagree with them.

I may, for example, keep my irritation at you inside myself, and each time you do whatever it is that irritates me, my stomach keeps score ...2...3...6...8... until one day the doctor pronounces that I have a bleeding ulcer, or until one day you do the same thing that you have always done and my secret hatred of you erupts in one great emotional avalanche.

You, of course, will not understand. You will feel that this kind of overcharged reaction is totally unjustified. You will react angrily to my buried emotional hostility. Such a failure to cope with anger can end in homicide.

Expression

Expression of emotions is important to building good relationships with others. People need to express their feelings in such a manner that they influence, affirm, reshape, and change themselves and others. They need to learn to express angry feelings constructively rather than destructively.

The following guidelines can be helpful.

1. Be aware of your emotions.
2. Admit your emotions. Do not ignore or deny them.
3. Own your emotions. Accept responsibility for what you do.
4. Investigate your emotions. Do not seek for a means of rebuttal to win an argument.
5. Report your emotions. Congruent communication means an accurate match between what you are saying and what you are experiencing.
6. Integrate your emotions with your intellect and your will. Allow yourself to learn and grow as a person.

Emotions cannot be repressed. They should be identified, observed, reported, and integrated. Then people instinctively can make necessary adjustments in the light of their own ideas of growth. They can change and move on with life.

5. SELF-DISCLOSURE

Sidney Jourard, author of The Transparent Self (1971) and Self-Disclosure (1971), says that self-disclosure -- the ability to talk truthfully and fully about oneself -- is necessary to effective communication. Jourard contends that we cannot really communicate with other people unless we can engage in self-discourse.

Indeed, this is a mutual process. The more I know about you, and the more you know about me, the more effective and efficient our communication will be.

A person's ability to engage in self-revelation is a symptom of a healthy personality. Powell (1969) put it this way:

> I have to be free and able to say my thoughts to you, to tell you about my judgments and values, to expose to you my fears and frustrations, to admit to you my failures and shames, to share my triumphs, before I can really be sure what it is that I am and can become. I must be able to tell you who I am before I can know who I am. And I must know who I am before I can act truly, that is, in accordance with my true self.

It can be argued that we will understand only as much of ourselves as we have been willing to communicate to another person.

Blocks to Self-Revelation

To know themselves and to have satisfying interpersonal relationships, people must reveal themselves to others. Yet self-revelation is blocked by many. For example (Powell, 1969):

Powell: "I am writing a booklet, to be called Why Am I Afraid to Tell Who I Am?"

Other: "Do you want to answer that question?"

Powell: "That is the purpose of the booklet, to answer the question."

Other: "But do you want my answer?"

Powell: "Yes, of course I do."

Other: "I am afraid to tell you who I am, because if I tell who I am, you may not like who I am, and it's all that I have."

This conversation from real life reflects the fears and doubts that many people have -- that they are not totally acceptable to others, that parts of themselves are unlovable, that they are unworthy. Cautious, ritualized communication behavior is the result.

Dynamics of Trust

The dynamics of fear can be exchanged for the dynamics of trust. No one is likely to engage in much self-disclosure in a threatening situation. Self-disclosure can be made only in an atmosphere of good will. Sometimes it takes one person's risk of self-disclosure to stimulate good will in other people. Trust begets trust; self-disclosure generates self-disclosure. The effective communicator is one who can create a climate of trust in which mutual self-disclosure can occur.

Being an effective communicator, then, is based on these five basic components: an adequate self-concept; the ability to be a good listener; the skill of expressing one's thoughts and ideas clearly; being able to cope with emotions, such as anger, in a functional manner; and the willingness to disclose oneself to others.

Source:

Chartier, Myron R. The 1974 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitation. La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1974.

Closure

Time: 5 minutes

Materials:

None

Spend a few moments reviewing Objectives 1, 2 and 3. Remind the participants of how each objective was accomplished.

Answer any general questions that the participants may have.

Post-test

Time: 5 minutes (optional)

Materials:

Post-test

Administer the post-test.

Allow participants to discuss and clarify any misconceptions they may have concerning interpersonal communication.

Evaluation

Time: 5 minutes (optional)

Distribute the evaluation forms and have the participants complete them.

EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

1. **Communication is a process.**
2. **Communication is inevitable.**
3. **Communication is continuous.**
4. **Communication is irreversible.**
5. **A major purpose of communication is more communication.**
6. **interpersonal communication occurs on more than one level.**
7. **One's self-concept is affected by and affects one's interpersonal communication.**
8. **Physical setting can have a important influence on interpersonal communication.**

Good interpersonal communication involves trying to express some important values.

(ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, n.d.)

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION VALUES

1. Openness
2. Spontaneity
3. Here and Now
4. Authenticity
5. Self Disclosure
6. Empathy
7. Acceptance
8. Warmth
9. Trust
10. Acceptance of Feelings
11. Listening

(ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, n.d.)

PRINCIPLES OF CONFIRMATION

When we interact with a person, some of our communication behaviors serve to confirm or disconfirm that person.

1. **It is more confirming to be recognized as existing than to be treated as non-existing.**

2. **Dialogue is more confirming than monologue.**

3. **Acceptance is more confirming than interpretation.**

4. **It is more confirming to be treated personally than impersonally.**

(Evelyn Sieburg, n.d.)

DISCONFIRMING RESPONSES

1. Impervious Response
2. Interrupting Response
3. Irrelevant Response
4. Tangential Response
5. Impersonal Response
6. Incoherent Response
7. Incongruous Response

(Evelyn Sieburg, n.d.)

CONFIRMING RESPONSES

1. **Direct Acknowledgement**
   React directly to the speaker's remark.

2. **Agreement about Content**
   Agree with the ideas, attitudes, opinions, or beliefs expressed by the speaker.

3. **Supportive Response**
   Respond with understanding and reassurance.

4. **Clarifying Response**
   Ask for more information or elaborate on the speaker's remarks.

5. **Expression of Positive Feeling**
   "I like your ideas."
   "I'm excited about your plans."

(Evelyn Sieburg, n.d.)

PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR AND EFFECTIVE INTERPRESONAL COMMUNICATION

1. **Communicators should recognize that there will always be more to say.**

2. **Communicators should clarify their meanings.**

3. **Communicators should attempt to date and index their references.**

4. **Communicators should differentiate between fact and value judgments.**

(ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, n.d.)

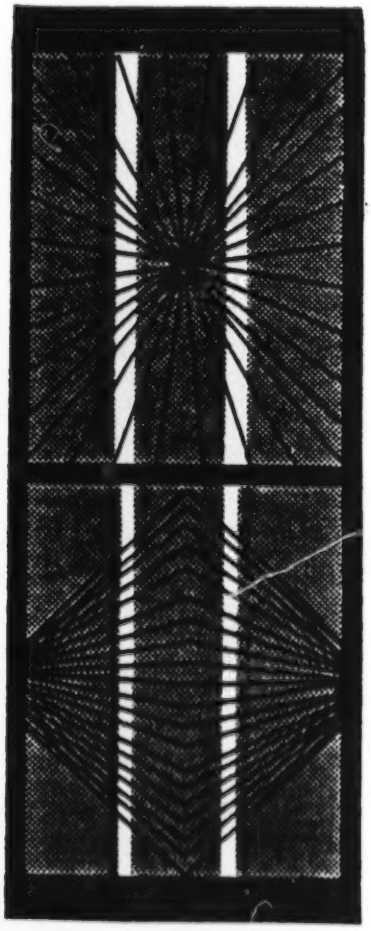
WORDY PHRASES

Source: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

Training Module VIII: RD
Transparency 8

PARALLEL LINES

Figure 17: Are the two lines parallel?



SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

Training Module VIII: RD
Transparency 9

THE TWO LADIES

Figure 20. Where are the two ladies?

Picture designed by American psychologist E.G. Boring.
SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

Training Module VIII: RD
Transparency 10

THE OLD LADY

SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

THE YOUNG LADY

SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

THE HIDDEN MAN I

SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

Training Module VIII: RD
Transparency 13

THE HIDDEN MAN II

SOURCE: Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind

Training Module VIII: RD
Transparency 14

FIVE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Self-Concept
2. Listening
3. Clarity Of Expression
4. Coping With Angry Feelings
5. Self Disclosure

(Myron R. Chartier, 1974)

WARM-UP ACTIVITY SHEET

1. Three positive things I think I am are... .
   (positive aspects of your personality and/or character)

   a.

   b.

   c.

2. An experience that had a positive impact upon me was... .
   (an experience from your immediate or distant past)

3. I personally believe people should (not)... .

PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR AND EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

1. **Communicators should recognize that there will always be more to say.** The nature of language and of reality is such that we can always say more about anything. No topic is ever exhausted, and this is especially true in an interpersonal situation where we are likely to discuss a variety of matters in a relatively spontaneous and unsystematic manner. Hence, it is important during interpersonal communication to maintain an awareness of our inability to base any conclusions we reach on a thorough consideration of all of the facts. Such an awareness should enable us to avoid becoming too rigid or dogmatic or closed-minded in our positions and attitudes. Every conclusion we reach should be viewed as tentative and subject to revision. Our interpersonal communication is likely to be enhanced whenever we can keep it open and flexible.

2. **Communicators should clarify their meanings.** It is common in an interpersonal situation to assume that others are using words the way we generally use them, but this may not always be true. "I parked my car far away" might mean half a block to one person and half a mile to another. "Sally had three drinks at the party" might suggest to some that Sally drinks too much and to others that she does not overindulge. It is perfectly acceptable to ask someone what he or she means by something or to elaborate on our own remarks when others appear to be misinterpreting us. Problems are most likely to arise when we naively assume that there is no need for clarification or elaboration because everyone understands the words that are being used. One reason why our interpersonal communication is redundant -- why we repeat our feelings and ideas -- is that we tend to recognize the fact that further clarification is necessary if we are to avoid being misunderstood.

3. **Communicators should attempt to date and index their references.** In November 1972 Richard M. Nixon, after winning the presidency by more than sixty percent of the vote, was not the same person that he was in May 1973, when he appeared on television to explain his role and position with regard to the Watergate scandal. Yet our language allows us to talk about Nixon without any reference to time or situation. Clearly, "Nixon 1972" is not the same as "Nixon 1952" or "Nixon 1973." People and events change, and to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity in our interpersonal relationships, it is wise to qualify our references by dating and indexing them.

Dating might consist simply of letting people know the periods to which we are referring by stating the date or time. Indexing refers to any acknowledgment of the fact that we are using a term in a particular way. For example, the word silence could refer to the quiet that exists in an interpersonal situation when the participants are calm, relaxed, and satisfied. It also could refer to a state of frustration in which no one knows what to say, a state of fear in which the participants are afraid to say anything, a state of awe in which the participants are at a loss for words, and so on. By indexing the word, that is, by clarifying our particular use of the word silence, we can reduce ambiguity and communicate more effectively.

4. **Communicators should differentiate between statements of fact and value judgments.** Many of our assertions refer to facts that can be observed by others and that are capable of verification." The price of meat in the supermarket has gone up" or "The population of River City has increased over the past ten years" are examples of factual statements. But such statements as "The steak is too well done" or "River City is overpopulated" are value judgments that tell us as much about the person making the statement as they do about the events being judged. Difficulties can arise when we treat judgments as if they were facts and fail to recognize that they represent a point of view. Some of these difficulties can be avoided by using the phrase "to me" whenever we make a value judgment. This phrase clearly establishes the fact that the speaker is revealing something about himself or herself and is presenting a point of view.

Source:

A Brief Overview of Communication. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, n.d

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Margaret Lorraine Dancy

My name is Margaret Lorraine Dancy. I repeat, my name is Margaret Lorraine Dancy. Yes, you now know my name, but do you really know who I am, or do I really know who you are? Can we get behind the surface details of accent, hair style, age, clothing and skin color so that you can perceive the real me, and I can perceive the real you, and thus, you can understand my intended message and I can understand yours?

Certainly, we must remember that real communication means breaking through imaginary images. As we seek to break through some of these images, let us keep in mind: "What counts in life is not so much the facts, but the manner in which we see and interpret them."[1] Thus, in cross-cultural communications it is particularly our pre-conceived images that cause difficulty: What is our image of a child who is poor? What is our image of a child from a Mexican-American background? What is our image of a black parent? I repeat, real communication means breaking through images. Only then can real communication take place across cultural lines.

Webster's dictionary defines communication as a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols. A small key word which can easily be overlooked in this definition is <u>"common"</u> as in "common system of symbols." This small word reminds us that the person with whom we wish to communicate must utilize the same symbols we use if our messages are to be correctly decoded. In other words, we must raise the question: Do we share a common system of symbols with our pupils so that effective communication can take place? Communication implies that a message has reached its intended destination and has been correctly decoded. To communicate cross-culturally, however, is even more involved.

First, we must deal with images. As we focus on effective cross-cultural communication, I would suggest that we highlight this comment: "To achieve understanding, we need to want it."[2] In other words, remember that no matter how much we learn intellectually about persons in another culture, we must <u>want</u> to communicate with persons from that culture in order for effective communication to become a realization. The above principle must underlie everything else which is mentioned here, or we run the risk of engaging in a fruitless intellectual exercise.

One of my favorite authors on the subject of communication is the Swiss-born and French-speaking psychiatrist, Paul Tournier. Paul Tournier relates a story which alludes to a cross-cultural encounter with an American doctor from New York whom he had a chance to meet: "He [the American doctor] immediately impressed me as most likeable. Yet we had quite a problem in

he but a few words in French! Even so we managed to get through to one another for both of us most ardently wanted to."[3] This, indeed, is the key that unlocks that door to cross-cultural understanding in the classroom--we must want to communicate effectively with our students.

Verbal communication is a special problem. Middle-class America, in particular, seems to have been trained that talking equals communication (T=C). This could hardly be further from the truth. There is, indeed, much talking in America, but alas, much of it is falling on deaf ears--not because our ears cannot hear, but because too often we have chosen not to hear. Tournier calls this the "dialogues of the deaf." He says: "We must be reminded that, the first condition for mutual understanding is the desire for, the seeking after and the willing of that understanding...This basic attitude toward understanding is rarer than we think. Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations...They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf. Each one speaks primarily in order to set forth his own ideas...in order to enhance himself..."[4] Let us then endeavor to break through these images as we seek to achieve understanding as to what cross-cultural communications is all about.

Sociolinguistics as a Tool To Interpret Communication Cross-Culturally

We will derive our model for discussing cross-cultural communications from the field of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is a relatively new discipline. This field has the tools to interpret communication cross-culturally. Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics, while linguistics is a study of languages and their structure. Sociolinguistics takes the study of language structure a step further by studying language in its social context. This new discipline has links with the fields of anthropology, social psychology and sociology. In the book Language and Cultural Diversity, this observation is made:

> Although sociolinguistics is a relatively new area of study, and its research techniques and concepts still in the developmental stage, the significance of its findings to education is already enormous, for sociolinguistic conflict in the classroom is one of the most potent sources of problems in cross-cultural communications between teacher and student. Many misunderstandings arise over the intent of messages when these are sent and received in different dialects or languages. And institutional depreciation of students' speech patterns both prevents an adequate evaluation of their verbal ability and helps alienate them from the teacher and the goals of education...Spanish detention and whippings for speaking Navajo still haunt many schools, serving as a reminder of the traditional attitude of the dominant Anglo majority attitude of the dominant Anglo majority toward the education of minority groups.[5]

Indeed, there is a need to determine how the school's language code conflicts or agrees with the child's language code in interpreting messages.

Hymes' Interactionist's Model of Language and Social Life

In analyzing components of cross-cultural communication, we will look at the Interactionist's Model of Communication which was developed by Dell Hymes, an anthropologist-linguist at the University of Pennsylvania. This model views language within the social context.[6] Therefore one begins the analysis with a social entity, rather than a linguistic unit. This social entity is the speech community. The concept of the speech community will be further analyzed later in this discourse as this concept is vital to the Interactionist's Model and cross-cultural communication.

Language Field and Speech Field - Let us now examine some fundamental concepts in the Interactionist's Model for cross-cultural communications. The concepts, language field and speech field, are corner stones of the Interactionist's Model. These two factors, language field and speech field, intertwine. Language field can be defined as a area delimited by one's repertoire of varieties of a language or languages. In other words, our language field would be those languages, or standard or non-standard varieties within a language, which we can use for verbal expression. For you and me, the language or languages we know constitute our language fields.

Hymes writes this example of language field: "In the case of German, Czech, and Austrian natives, the Czech knows no German, so he is in a different language field from the German speaker, while the Austrian who knows German would be in the same language field as the German speaker."[7]

Here in the United States both blacks and whites speak a particular variety of the English language. There are both standard and non-standard varieties of English, just as there are standard and non-standard varieties for all languages. Indeed, the standard English-speaking teacher in the schools can usually understand the English of his or her black pupils, even if this variety of English is non-standard. Also, such children can usually understand the teacher's variety of English. This is because the teacher and the child would belong to the same language field. Yet we shall see that a common langauge field is far from enough for effective cross-cultural communication. This two-pronged concept also calls for consideration of one's speech field.

Speech field is defined as being delimited by one's repertoire of patterns of speaking. This term refers to that area which shares rules of speaking for such social contexts as greetings, accepting or offering favors, giving commands or deciding what should be said next in a conversation. Rules of speaking would be those ways in which speakers associate particular message forms with particular settings and activities.

Consider Hungary, Austria and southern Germany, as we again use an illustration from abroad. These countries would be considered a speech field as there are shared speaking rules among these contiguous language groups. In other words, such speech rules as the rules for greeting one another would be the same in each area. (Ex. Such rules consider: In a speech situation, does the older person speak first? Is only one word sufficient for a greeting?) Thus, though the Hungarian's language may differ from that spoken in Austria, a Hungarian would feel at home in Austria within the social context of the communicative situation.

Much closer to home, the speech field of urban, inner-city black youth might just include New York's Harlem, as well as Los Angeles' Watts area. Here the rules of speaking in the social context would probably have wide agreement. Thus, the rules for greeting ("Give me some skin," "What's happenin' man?") would be similar in Harlem or Watts. Rules for offering favors or making requests would be the same also.

Yet these same inner-city black youth may not be very familiar with the speech rules for white middle-class America just a few blocks away. More specifically, black children may be unfamiliar with the rule of speaking in middle class America which avoids conflict in educational setting through the use of the extended message form. Rather, the teacher whose speech field differs from this pupil's speech field misinterprets the student's precise message. Note this example: A teacher emphatically tells two students to go to the library and check out particular books. Student A (who has no intention of going to the library) reasons: "I don't think I would care to get a book from the library today, but I might check out a book tomorrow." Student B (who also has no intention of going to the library) responds: "I will not." Here we have examples of children from two different speech fields. Student A belongs to the same speech field as the teacher so he is aware of the extended message form which would be a part of the speech rule for disagreement within an educational setting. Student B's speech field, on the other hand, differs from that of the teacher so his message gets misinterpreted as impolite.

In his classic work, The Logic of Non-Standard English, William Labov has noted that the differences in the use of mitigating forms between blacks and whites in the educational setting has often caused misunderstandings. Labov observes that the child caught in this cross-fire needs to understand the highly developed forms of language used to avoid conflict between individuals in face-to-face encounters.[8] To Labov's statement I would add that the teacher also needs to put forth effort to understand the precise message form of such a student. Such a message need not be intended to be impolite. Indeed, the child simply may not know the school's speech rule for disagreement which calls for the extended message form. Therefore, Student B and his teacher

belong to different speech fields. Certainly rules for speaking in the social context in some black communities may be radically different from the speaking rules in the social context in the white community.

It is my contention that the failure of educators to understand this important sociolinguistic principle as to the difference between language field and speech field has caused much cross-cultural misunderstanding. The child caught in the cross-fire between different speech fields within the education setting either become withdrawn or remains in continued verbal conflict. Thus, the child could be failed, not because he lacks ability, but because the child does not use the mitigating forms of the school's speech field. We have always assumed that if a person spoke English we could understand his language, but not necessarily the rules of speaking he is using.

The rules which govern speech are unconscious. This means that the rules for our particular speech field are below the level of awareness. Thus, we do not even realize when we are applying a particular rule of speaking. These rules include rules for greetings, asking directions, making a point of emphasis or making a request. Thus, I could not know all the subtleties of Mexican-American communication -- such as when to speak, when not to speak, how loudly to speak, when to speak in a friendly tone or when to speak in an angry tone -- no matter how much Spanish I had learned unless I had take time to learn the rules for speaking as well. Indeed, a shared language field is not enough for effective cross-cultural communications. What then makes for effective cross-cultural communication? Effective cross-cultural communications must merge one's language field and speech field into a speech network.

Speech Network - Speech network is the term which refers to specific linkages of persons through shared varieties and speaking rules across communities. It represents the total range of communities within which a person's knowledge of varieties and speaking rules potentially enables him to move communicatively. Indeed, a teacher's speech network should include not only the minority child's language but also the rules of speaking which this child brings with him or her to a communicative situation. Likewise, the minority child who knows the language and rules of speaking for "uptown" (his own turf), as well as "downtown" (the middle-class business community) is communicating effectively within a speech network.

What is your speech network? We must assess our values, self-concept, roles, political involvements in order to determine our speech network. Not surprisingly, we will find our speech network is narrow and limited culturally. Few of us really have attempted to seriously understand those who use very different patterns of speaking.

Speech Community - A speech network is composed of a number of different

speech communities. What then is a speech community? speech community is a community of human beings sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety. Both conditions are essential.

In the desegregated school, problems in communication arise, not because children are poorer, or have working mothers, etc., but because there may be two different speech communities interacting with different rules of speaking. Suppose a new student entered your classroom from a West European country such as France. This French child already shares the same basic speech field as American children. Rules for greetings and asking requests are similar. Thus, the child from France only has to learn a new language in order to facilitate her adjustment. I contend that it is the shared speech field (rules of speaking) that has helped make it easier for many persons of a West European background to assimilate in the American middle-class. Such a person already shares most of the rules of speaking -- rules for politeness, sarcasm, and anger are all expressed similarly in these European communities. The world is getting "smaller." Thus, cross-cultural problems will not be resolved just by learning the language of another culture. Rather we will need knowledge as to how to get a message correctly interpreted in that culture. This is especially significant as we communicate with non-Western European cultural groups, such as cultural groups from Asia, the Middle-East, and Africa.

Speech Situation - Another component in the Interactionist's Model of communication is the speech situation. Speech situations are those situations within the speech community associated with or marked by the absence of speech. Within the American school speech situations would include the reading period, music period, assemblies, recess time, lunch time, play time after school, scout meetings and parent teacher meetings. Speech situations incorporate varied opportunities for persons to talk or not talk.

Speech Event - Within a speech situation, we can narrow down specific speech events. A speech event occurs within the speech situation and is governed by rules. Thus, a group reading period is a speech situation. Yet, the teacher's conversation with a particular child as she or he assists the child with difficult words is a speech event.

As we summarize our analysis of speech situations and speech events, we can then note that we pay little attention to such communicative details as who speaks first, whether our mother's voice is loud or very soft when she calls us. Such factors do not usually operate at the conscious level. Yet, the culturally different child must learn the rules of speaking for many speech events within his classroom. He must learn the rules for a request to be "excused," rules as to the degree of loud vocal tones permissible in the lunchroom, the rule regarding tattling on a student after a fight at recess and many other rules.

From this discussion it now should be evident that for effective cross-cultural communications we must learn not only the variety of a language that our children speak, but also we should be aware of the importance of learning their rules or patterns of speaking as well.

Finally, all that we have mentioned about cross-cultural communications is merely an intellectual exercise unless we want to understand others. We must care deeply for the children who are entrusted to us for their education:

> If we speak with the tongues of experts and consultants and have not love, we will have nothing but the noise of our own voices and clanging of our pet ideas. And if we develop new methods, and write new curriculum and learn ne techniques, and if we understand all about group dynamics, so as to remove all problems of schedule and discipline, but have not love, we are nothing. If we give all that has happened before, and deliver ourselves to practice a new program, but have not love, we gain nothing.
>
> Love never ends; as for conferences, they will pass away, as for camps they will cease, as for leadership training schools, they will pass away. For our methods are imperfect and our plans are imperfect and will pass away. When I was first recognized as an expert and a consultant I tried to cease being enamored with myself and speak out of humility. For now we see ourselves reflected in our own eyes, but then face to face. And there will come a time when we may be blessed to see the heart of what we are doing, and then we shall fully understand. So methods, techniques, group dynamics, regimentation, bell ringing, small group experiences, wholesome recreation -- there is all this and much more we could suggest, but greater than all of these is love.[9]

Source:

Moody, Charles D., & Vergon, Charles B. (Eds.) Humanistic Education In Desegregated Schools. University of Michigan, School of Education, Program for Educational Opportunity, n.d.

Footnotes

[1]Paul Tournier, To Understand Each Other (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 26.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[5]Rogers Abrahams and Rudolph Troike, Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp. 141-142.

[6]Dell Hymes, "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life," in John Gumperz and Dell Humes (eds.) Directions in Sociolinguistics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), p. 39.

[7]Ibid., p. 55.

[8]William Labov, The Study of Nonstandard English (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), p. 51.

[9]William C. Howland, Jr., American Baptist Newsletter, Fall 1976.

ATTITUDES COMMUNICATED NONVERBALLY

OPENNESS

CONFIDENCE

DEFENSIVENESS

NERVOUSNESS

SUSPICION

TERRITORIAL DOMINANCE

REASSURANCE

FRUSTRATION

COOPERATION

ACCEPTANCE

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY ONE

In this scene a coach is giving a "man-to-man" talk to some of his black athletes about what it really means to be a part of the team.

"Boys, I want you to understand that I'm in your corner all the way. Whenever you need anything, you can always call on me. Now, I want you to understand that we are a team. We work together, we think alike, we act alike because we are a team.

"I want you boys to feel like you're part of this team. That involves some give and take. In other words, so that the team will grow, you have to be willing to sacrifice in order to reap the benefits of being a team member.

"I want you to look like team members and be proud of it. Get rid of all that curly processed bizarre hair, look clean and neatly shaven. Show that you respect yourself by showing that you can take care of your body and mind. Good well-rounded athletes look the part and act the part. That's what I want from you, if you really plan to be a part of the team. Believe me, I have nothing against your modern hair styles as long as they don't get out of line.

"Okay, fellas, let's play ball."

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY TWO

In this scene students are congregated in the break area. They are playing transistor radios loudly enough to create such a cacophony of sound that it causes a teacher on duty in the area to approach them, with a grimace on her face.

"Turn that junk down! Don't you people have any respect for other people's right to quiet? You people are old enough to understand common social decency, or is that something beyond your level of understanding. What kind of up-bringing have you had, anyway? What makes you remember to bring transistor radios to school and forget to bring a pencil to class? Who taught you priorities, anyway? Attlila the Hun? If I hear anything more than a whisper from those transistorized pains-in-the-neck, I'll take them away from you permanently!"

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY THREE

Ms. Wright, a tenth grade social studies teacher, is reviewing last night's homework, calling on different members of the class to give the answers to specific questions. When she calls on Larry, he tells her that he did not get that particular question. Ms. Wright suspects that, once again, Larry has not done his homework at all, so after calling on several other students she returns to Larry for the answer to another question. Larry tells her that he did not get that answer either. Ms. Wright, filled with righteous indignation, launches into a tirade on Larry's lack of motivation, poor work habits, and generally sullen attitude. When she demands to know why he has not completed his homework this time, Larry, embarrassed, mumbles, "I told you I have to take care of my brothers and sisters 'till my mama gets home." Ms. Wright, paying minimal attention to what Larry is saying, proceeds to lecture on the importance of finished assignments and the reasons why school should be Larry's highest priority.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY FOUR

Ricardo, a tenth grader, is extremely concerned with maintaining a "tough" image around his peers, and will do whatever is necessary to keep up that image. In most of his classes he is uncommunicative, uncooperative, and disdainful of whatever is going on. His favorite subject, and his best subject, is biology; his least favorite is English. Mr. Blake, his English teacher, is by nature sarcastic, and frequently uses his impressive command of the language to put students down. Ricardo, a native Spanish speaker, retaliates by conducting audible conversations in Spanish with his buddies in the back row. Mr. Blake, who does not understand Spanish, suspects that Ricardo is either making fun of him or plotting some underhanded activity, and often singles out Ricardo as the object of his sarcasm with comments such as: "if you were as fluent in English as you seem to be in Spanish, you wouldn't be failing this course." Ricardo responds by muttering something under his breath in Spanish which is unintelligible to Mr. Blake, but which makes the whole back row laugh uproariously.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY FIVE

Marilyn, an 11th grade student, is bright and interested in all her subjects. Usually she makes excellent grades, and is a generally well-liked student. Marilyn is extremely outspoken: her manner of speaking is habitually loud and profane, and often she interrupts others in order to make her point, or silences them loudly and emphatically when she feels that they themselves are too noisy. Occasionally Marilyn gets into an altercation with another student, but these are normally insignificant and quickly settled. However, several of Marilyn's teachers are consistently disturbed by her way of expressing herself. They feel that her behavior is unladylike, inappropriate, and intimidating, and frequently remind Marilyn that so bright a girl should certainly know how to conduct herself with more decorum.

Training Module VIII: RD
Handout 6

CASE STUDIES RESPONSE SHEET

1. Describe critical aspects of the language field in the case study you have just read.

2. What aspects of the speech field make this a negative speech situation? Include a discussion of the various speech events, including rules of communication which have been violated in a cross cultural context.

3. What disconfirming responses are presented in this case study?

4. What attitudes are being presented in the study? Give examples.

5. What are your general perceptions of the main characters in the study?

6. What would your group recommend to resolve the communicative conflict?

HINTS FOR INCREASING LISTENING SKILLS

1. Have a reason for listening.
2. Suspend initial judgement.
3. Resist distractions.
4. Wait before you respond.
5. Repeat verbatim what a speaker says.
6. Paraphrase the speakers content and feeling.
7. Seek the important theme of what is being said.
8. Reflect upon the content of the message and search for meaning.
9. Be ready to respond to the speaker.

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